

Implementation challenges of universal basic education policy in Delta State, Nigeria: stakeholders' roles

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ABSTRACT

The study dwelt on the analysis of implementation challenges of universal basic education (UBE) in public primary schools. The expose facto research design and survey method were adopted to carry out the study. The multistage sampling technique was adopted to select 414 teachers. A self-constructed instrument was used to conduct the study. The instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach alpha statistics, which gave a 0.75 alpha coefficient and was deemed reliable. The researcher and six research assistants administered the instrument. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the research questions, while the hypothesis was tested with t-test statistics. The findings revealed many challenges facing the implementation of UBE in Delta state, which emanate primarily from parents and the government. It was recommended that the government provide adequate funds to provide a conducive environment for learning in school; the government should ensure that parents send their children to school by giving UBE more publicity, enlightening parents on the benefits of educating their wards, and enforcing sanctions to erring parents, among others.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an inalienable right of every citizen, as stated in Article 26 of the 1948 declaration of the United Nations on Universal Human Rights. The article further noted that education should be free and compulsory, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Nations, therefore, invest in education, especially at the basic level, to have a literate and enlightened citizenry. In 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo in Sokoto State launched universal basic education (UBE) in Nigeria. The UBE was a child of necessity, considering Nigeria's high illiteracy rate and out-of-school children. Federal Government of Nigeria hinted that 76 million Nigerian adults are illiterate [1]. The international bank for reconstruction and development/World Bank study revealed that Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children globally, up to 11 million between the ages of 6 to 15 in 2020 [2]. In 2022, about 20 million children were out of school in Nigeria, as reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), thus an increase in out-of-school children. The Cable hinted that Nigeria has 1 in 12 out-of-school children globally and 22 percent of all children in the age group [3]. The 2015 Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) puts Delta's literacy rate at 75%. This is not reassuring, considering what literate citizens stand to gain in society.

The UBE is an education program launched by the federal government of Nigeria in 1999 to provide education to Nigerian citizenry, specifically children aged six years to 12 years, as well as adult and non-formal

education. UBE will cover primary, junior secondary, nomadic education, and adult literacy. The term ‘Basic’ depicts that it is fundamental or essential and must be given at all costs. The universal component of the program implies that every Nigerian child, irrespective of age, creed, or place, is entitled to basic education [4].

Policy is a guiding principle guided by government acts. The antecedent of the UBE policy can be linked to the universal primary education (UPE) program, which operated in Western and Eastern Nigeria in 1954 and 1955. Ogbonnaya [5] noted that there was a semblance of this in 1955 and 1957 in the form of UPE in the Western and Eastern regions, respectively, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria UPE scheme of 1976. The UPE program could not yield the anticipated benefit owing to stakeholders’ lack of proper planning and implementation and poor and inadequate resource input, and it was subsequently abandoned. However, the 1999 UBE Policy came with promising benefits if well implemented:

- a. Live meaningful and fulfilling lives
- b. Contribute to the development of society
- c. Derive maximum social, economic, and cultural benefits from society, and
- d. Discharge their civil obligation completely.

These laudable aims of the UBE program are yet to be fully achieved in Nigeria. The Nigerian educational system has experienced many challenges in policy and program implementation. Past Nigerian governments have tried to provide basic education, but due to poor implementation and execution, the provision of basic education is said to be a mirage [6]. The Nigerian education system has been a colossal failure since it has little or no practical relevance in finding solutions to the real problems of society. The Nigerian child finds it difficult to receive a quality education as statistics reveal a broken system that does not make them reach their potential [7]. A tripartite arrangement for UBE funding consists of federal government direct allocations (through the UBE intervention fund and the education trust fund), state governments, and local governments. Parents and donor agencies are also included. A study by Ayua *et al.* [8] revealed that for three consecutive years, the state has been owing its counterpart funding; hence, funds were inadequate for UBE. According to Pressman and Wildavsky [9], policy implementation translates policy mandates into actions, prescriptions into results, and goals into reality. Various stakeholders such as the government (federal, state, and local government), parents, teachers, and learners have roles to play to ensure full policy implementation. The paper analyzed the challenges of the implementation of UBE from stakeholders.

According to Section 2 of the UBE Act, all governments in Nigeria are required to provide elementary and junior high school education available to all children who are of school age [10]. The act states that the child’s parents should ensure that the child attends and completes his primary and junior secondary school education, which embodies basic education. It is also noticed in the act that there are consequences for parents who contradict the duty of ensuring that the child benefits from the provision of basic education. The parent shall be liable to a fine of two thousand Naira (N2,000.00). The Compulsory, Free UBE Act in Section 11(a) provides for two percent of the consolidated revenue fund (CRF) to be used to execute the delivery of basic education [11]. Seventy percent of the total allocation is designated for infrastructural development: building various schools that will accommodate multiple students. The UBE Act 2004 includes guidelines for educating the public and getting everyone involved in the process; collecting and analyzing data on human and material resources; planning, overseeing, and evaluating; hiring teachers, educating them, training them, re-training them, and motivating them; providing infrastructure; providing enriched curricula; providing textbooks and other teaching materials; improving funding; and overseeing the whole process.

The government is a major stakeholder in implementing UBE and is responsible for funding and monitoring it. Akporehe [12] analysis of the federal government’s annual budget allocation to education, revealed that from 2015-2022, only 7.31% of the national budget was allocated to education, thus falling short of the recommendation of 26% of National budget to be allocated to education by UNESCO. In fiscal year 2023, Delta State allocated 42.6 billion (7.58%) to education out of a budget of 561.8 billion Naira. As a result of the limited resources in the education sector, the issues of inadequate infrastructure like classrooms and underpaid teaching staff have become a concern [13]. Ifesiokwu [14], Asuk [15], and Asoro [16] found a facilities deficit in basic education in Delta State. Andokari *et al.* [17] found that qualified teachers could not teach core subjects for the UBE program in the Southern Education zones of Taraba State. Obasi and Madu [18] in Ossai [19] in Delta State found that the UBE program was poorly implemented due to inadequate resources and infrastructure. Oladele [20] highlighted a major problem: the weak implementation of UBE. He says the lack of institutional and intergovernmental relations has led to undefined roles, leaving no government or agency with precise, accountable results. He also lamented that the creation of state universal basic education board (SUBEB) and universal basic education commission (UBEC) has further disorganized the implementation of UBE as laws and directives could conflict. The international bank for reconstruction and development/World Bank [2] has also noted gaps in core oversight and accountability functions at the state and local government level, which has resulted in institutional overlaps between the three tiers of implementing agencies-UBEC, SUBEB, and local government education

authorities (LGEAs). The federal constitution of Nigeria 1999 placed education on the concurrent legislative list with local government areas in charge of primary education.

Parents attitudes and the financial support they offer may contribute positively to their children's school attendance, academic success, and social and personal competencies, regardless of age [21]. Lots of Nigerian children are engaged in child labor. With less parental support in school work, a low level of motivation and poor self-esteem of children can result [22]. Akporehe and Uviovo [23] recommended in their study on innovations for attaining sustainable development goals persisting in schools in Nigeria that improving the living conditions of families, among others, would make a girl child remain in school and, by implication, boys. Takwate *et al.* [24], in a study conducted, indicated that parental involvement was crucial in determining good students' academic achievement. Apebende *et al.* [25] study found that parents have not recognized their roles as involvement in their children's education was significantly low, so they have not functioned appropriately.

A teacher's position as a central figure in any educational endeavor is globally recognized. As such, it is agreed that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Society, therefore, expects many things from the teachers. Perhaps because teachers are not performing their best, the ongoing efforts to raise their initial professional preparation level will be pursued, broadened, and intensified. With such a laudable venture coupled with incentives in the form of sponsorship through grants available to teachers, the attitude of teachers towards work and the actualization of the UBE program would be enhanced [26]. Egenegbe *et al.* [27] have also recommended capacity building for all teachers in Delta State as there was low attendance of capacity building workshops. Sule and Oluwale [28] reveal from their study that adequately qualified teachers are employed to successfully implement the UBE program in Benue State, with most of the teachers being the Nigeria certificate in education (NCE). However, a significant problem is the availability of teachers in rural areas. Some constraints that affect the success rates of the UBE program in rural communities are teachers' inadequacy and their unwillingness to be posted there; a proper teacher distribution policy is needed [29].

- Research questions:

- a. What are the ratings of head teachers and teachers on challenges of implementation of UBE in public primary school education in Delta Central senatorial district arising from the angle of the government?
 - b. What are the ratings of head teachers and teachers on challenges of implementing UBE in public primary school education in Delta Central senatorial district arising from the angle of parents?
 - c. What are the ratings of head teachers and teachers on challenges of implementing UBE in public primary school education in Delta Central senatorial district arising from the angle of teachers?
- Hypothesis: there is no significant difference in the ratings of head teachers and teachers on the challenges of implementation of UBE in public primary education in Delta Central senatorial district arising from the angles of government, parents, and teachers.

2. METHOD

The goal of the study was to examine the implementation challenges of UBE policy in public primary education from the stakeholders' role. The study methodology outlines how the study was carried out. This study utilized a quantitative approach, utilizing questionnaires to identify implementation challenges of UBE policy in public primary education looking at the stakeholders' role. It focused on quantitative methods, specifying the value to gather data in addressing the highlighted research problems. The findings are then interpreted, allowing the researchers to delve into the problem in depth and obtain more detailed information regarding respondents understanding and misconceptions about the study.

The study is survey research that adopted the expose facto design. Primary school head teachers and teachers in Delta Central senatorial district of Delta State were the population of the study. There are 8 local government areas (LGAs) in Delta central senatorial district. Three LGAs were randomly selected through a simple ballot, making up 36% of the LGAs. These are Uvwie, Okpe, and Ethiope East, with 21, 39, and 61 primary schools, respectively, according to Delta State UBE Board Asaba as of 2021. This gave rise to 121 public primary schools in these 3 LGAs. The total number of head teachers was 121, and 1763 teachers. A total of 61 head teachers were taken to give 50%. 20% of the 1763 teachers were also taken to provide 353 teachers. This gave rise to a total of 414 respondents. To get the schools in the LGAs, a simple ballot was made by writing all the names of the schools and picking the respondents from these schools according to the total number of respondents to administer the questionnaire to. At least ten persons were then randomly selected from the schools in each local government (LG) to correspond with the number of subjects needed.

An instrument analysis of stakeholders' roles in the implementation of compulsory education policy (ASRICEP) questionnaire was used to collect data. The instrument comprised three sections corresponding to the study's three stakeholders: government, parents, and teachers. The instrument's validity was determined

by two professors in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations and an expert in test construction in the Department of Test and Measurement to determine the face and content validity. Their inputs were used to improve the questionnaire. The instrument's reliability was measured using Cronbach Alpha statistics, and a 0.75 alpha coefficient was obtained, thus reliable. The instrument was rated on a 4 Likert scale of strongly agree (SA)-4, agree (A)-3, disagree (D)-2, and strongly disagree (SD)-1, which were collapsed into two-SA and A (positive) and D and SD (negative). These were used to identify who to blame or not. The instrument was administered to the respondents with the help of 5 research assistants who were guided on the instructions on filling the instrument. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The hypothesis was tested using t-test statistics.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

This session discusses the presentation of results and discussion of findings in line with research questions that were raised and the hypotheses formulated.

- RQ1: Has the government played a role in implementing compulsory education in public primary school education from the government's angle?

Table 1 shows that the government is to be blamed for poor implementation of compulsory education in 6 items except item 1. Item one showed that salaries are paid, but item 2 asserted that salary arrears are not paid. Item 3 stated that government is to be blamed for the non-conducive school environment. Similarly, items 4 to 6, believed that the government is to be blamed lack of teachers, headteachers not being involved in school decision making, pupils attendance compliance not being monitored, and parents are sanctioned if their wards do not attend school. Thus, majority of the items agreed that the government is to be blamed for the poor implementation of compulsory education due to their non-effective role in the educational system.

Table 1. Ratings of teachers on government role in the implementation of compulsory education

No	Questionnaire items	Respondents	Positive		Negative		Remark
			SA	A	D	SD	
1	Salaries are paid	Headteacher	-	15 (3.5%)	46 (11.1%)	-	No blame
		Teacher	-	284 (68.6%)	69 (16.7%)	-	
2	Promotions are not delayed	Headteacher	-	20 (4.8%)	41 (9.9%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	142 (34.3%)	211 (51.0)	-	
3	School environments are conducive	Headteacher	-	17 (4.1%)	44 (10.6%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	42 (10.1%)	314 (75.1%)	-	
4	There are adequate teachers	Headteacher	-	10 (2.4%)	51 (12.3%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	74 (17.9%)	297 (67.4%)	-	
5	Headteachers are involved in the decision	Headteacher	-	2 (.5%)	59 (14.3%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	63 (15.2%)	290 (70%)	-	
6	Pupils' attendance compliance is monitored	Headteacher	-	8 (1.9%)	53 (12.3%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	76 (18.4%)	277 (66.9%)	-	
7	Parents are sanctioned if their wards do not attend school	Headteacher	-	7 (1.7%)	54 (13.05)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	30 (7.2%)	323 (78%)	-	

- RQ2: Have parents played their roles in implementing compulsory education in public primary schools?

Table 2 shows that parents were rated as having failed in their roles in all the seven items in the implementation of UBE and are, therefore, the most implicated stakeholders for poor implementation of compulsory education. Item 1 to 6 showed that teachers rated parents as a factor in the poor implementation of compulsory education. They blamed the parents for not complying with the six years of age before enrolling their wards in primary school, parents not buy writing materials for their children, parents not allowing their children to come to school regularly, parents not supervising their wards in terms of assignment, parents not cooperating with the school by attending parents teachers association (PTA) meetings, and not allowing their wards to complete six years of primary education before entering secondary education.

- RQ3: Have teachers played their roles in implementing UBE in Public primary school education?

The analysis showed that teachers played most of their roles in implementing compulsory education from all the items in Table 3. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, did not blame teachers for their various roles in the implementing compulsory education. This is because they come to school regularly, competent in their subject

area/matter, work with minimum control, resourceful and innovative, and develops themselves. They are, however, to be blamed in items 5 and 6 (teachers not accept posting to rural areas and teachers engaging in other businesses during school hours, which showed negative results). Therefore, they not a factor in the poor implementation of compulsory education in Public primary school education in Nigeria. This is because the Table 3 showed positive reports on teachers' role in the implementation of compulsory education

Table 2. Ratings of teachers on parents' roles in the implementation of compulsory education

No	Questionnaire items	Respondents	Positive		Negative		Remark
			SA	A	D	SD	
1	Parents comply with six years of age before enrolling their wards in primary school.	Headteacher	-	21 (5.1%)	40 (9.7%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	114 (27.5%)	239 (57.7%)	-	
2	Parents buy writing materials for their children	Headteacher	-	25 (6.0%)	36 (8.7%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	157 (37.9%)	196 (47.3%)	-	
3	Parents allow their children to come to school regularly	Headteacher	-	20 (4.8%)	41 (9.9%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	92 (20.2%)	261 (63.0%)	-	
4	Parents supervise their wards in terms of assignment	Headteacher	-	5 (1.2%)	56 (13.5%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	26 (6.3%)	327 (79%)	-	
5	Parents cooperate with the school by attending PTA meeting	Headteacher	-	7 (1.7%)	54 (13.0%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	32 (7.7%)	321 (77.5%)	-	
6	Parents allow their wards to complete six years of primary education before entering secondary education.	Headteacher	-	10 (2.4%)	51 (12.3%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	75 (18.1%)	278 (76.1%)	-	
7	Parents know the consequences of their actions and inactions in the UBE program	Headteacher	-	2 (.5%)	59 (14.3%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	29 (7.0%)	324 (78%)	-	

Table 3. Ratings on teachers' role in the implementation of compulsory education

No	Questionnaire items	Respondents	Positive		Negative		Remark
			SA	A	D	SD	
1	Teachers come to school regularly	Headteacher	-	1 (.2%)	60 (14.5%)	-	No blame
		Teacher	-	333 (80.4%)	20 (4.8%)	-	
2	Teachers are competent in their subject area	Headteacher	-	1 (.2%)	60 (14.5%)	-	No blame
		Teacher	-	353 (85.3%)	-	-	
3	Teachers work with minimum control	Headteacher	-	1 (.2%)	60 (14.5%)	-	No blame
		Teacher	-	335 (80.9%)	18 (4.3%)	-	
4	Teachers are resourceful and innovative	Headteacher	-	1 (.2%)	60 (14.5%)	-	No blame
		Teacher	-	344 (83.1%)	9 (2.2%)	-	
5	Teachers accept posting to rural areas	Headteacher	-	60 (14.5%)	1 (.2%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	44 (10.6%)	309 (74.6%)	-	
6	Teacher develops themselves	Headteacher	-	2 (.5%)	59 (14.3%)	-	No blame
		Teacher	-	239 (57.7%)	114 (27.5%)	-	
7	Teachers engage in other businesses during school hours	Headteacher	-	4 (1.0%)	57 (13.8%)	-	Blamed
		Teacher	-	273 (65.9%)	80 (19.3%)	-	

- Hypothesis: there is no significant difference in the ratings of head teachers and teachers on the roles played by the stakeholders in the implementation of compulsory education in public primary education.

The analysis in Table 4 showed no significant difference between the head teacher and class teachers in their views on the roles of stakeholders in implementing compulsory UBE. This means that both have the same views on the stakeholders who are to blame for the poor implementation of compulsory schooling. The implication is that the government is implicated in role abdication in the implementation of UBE and is to be

blamed. This is evidenced in majority of the items studied. the government is implicated in role abdication and the weak implementation of UBE thus; they are the stakeholders to be blamed for the poor implementation of compulsory schooling. This due to the fact that the government abdicated their roles greatly in compulsory schooling implementation of the educational system.

Table 4. T-test analysis of the difference between head teacher and class teachers' ratings on the role played in the implementation of compulsory education

Group	N	Group statistics			t	DF	Sig. (2tailed)
		Mean	Mean diff.	SD			
Headteacher	61	44.049	.38	4.371	-479	412	.632
Class teacher	353	44.439		6.087			

3.2. Discussion

The government is implicated in role abdication in the implementation of UBE and is to be blamed. Oladele [20] highlighted a significant problem: the weak implementation of UBE. This is evidenced in all the items studied except item one, which says that salaries are paid to teachers. However, promotions are not affected; thus, teachers stagnate. The school environment was rated uncondusive, while teachers were inadequate. This is supported by Ossai [19] who found poor funding and facilities deficit in basic education in Delta state. These findings are supported by Amuche and Kukwi [30] and Ayua *et al.* [8], who revealed the inadequacy of funds for UBE. UBEC had frowned at states for not accessing the annual matching grants as they could not provide counterpart funding. The low 7.45% budgetary allocation to education in 2023 supports why school environments are not conducive.

Parents post the highest abdicator in the implementation of UBE in all the seven items and are to be blamed the more. The most poorly implemented role is item 11, which is rated disagreed with regarding whether parents supervise their wards regarding assignment. This is closely followed by item 14, which disagrees with the idea that parents are aware of the consequences of their actions and inactions in the UBE program. Apebende *et al.* [25] supports this finding; found that parents have not recognized their roles as involvement in their children's education was significantly low, so they have not functioned appropriately. This is the bane of children not attending school regularly, not doing assignments, and not buying learning materials for their wards and others.

Edho [31] laments that teachers refuse to go and teach in remote areas. The reasons for engaging in business during school hours could arise from not being promoted when due. However, on the whole, teachers played most of their roles in the implementation of UBE in Delta State and are not to be blamed for the poor implementation of compulsory education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation challenges of UBE policy in public primary education looking at the stakeholders' role. The study identified the government and parents as stakeholders to blame for the poor implementation of compulsory education. In other words, the government is implicated in role abdication and the weak implementation of UBE, thus, they are the stakeholders to be blamed. In addition, our study discovered that promotions are not affected and so teachers stagnate. The school environment was rated uncondusive, while teachers were inadequate. It was found that parents, followed by the government, abdicated their roles greatly and should be blamed accordingly. The study found that teachers played most of their roles in the implementation of UBE. Thus, teachers played the majority of their roles and did not bear much blame. The study has implications for parents fulfilling their roles in the education of their children. Government has the role of funding the policy or program, monitoring, planning strategies to ensure that parents key into the compulsory education policy; and teachers are well distributed in the schools. The study also has implication on welfare of teachers. The study recommended that the government should fund UBE implementation to provide resources in schools, there should be public enlightenment on the importance of UBE. And that punishment or sanctions should be enforced on erring parents. Finally, allowances and incentives should be given to teachers posted in rural areas.

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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have gotten informed consent from all persons involved in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical principles were adhered to during the data collection process. The research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, [ADA], upon reasonable request.

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